

A gallery of notables

By SORAYA MOORE

Soraya Moore, a college sophomore, worked on the Journal-Bulletin news staff this summer.



From Profiles of Negro Womanhood

NEWPORT GARDNER opened a Newport singing school which he conducted for many years, having scholars at various times from some of the leading families. Such money as he acquired from this school was used to better the condition of his less fortunate brethren. By the time he was 50 years old, he had composed several anthems and set them to music. His *Promise* anthem was published in Boston and was much used by the black churches 100 years ago. He also established a church and financed a school for the benefit of his people. At the age of 80, he led an expedition back to his native Africa, where he died.

HANNIBAL COLLINS was born in Middletown, just outside the Newport line, and obtained his freedom by enlisting in the Continental Army. He fought and was wounded in the Battle of Rhode Island. At the outbreak of the War of 1812, he enlisted in the Naval Forces and accompanied Commodore Perry to Lake Erie, where he helped construct the fleet that drove British naval power from the Great Lakes forever. He was in charge of the commodore's barge during the famous engagement fought at Put-in-Bay on September 13, 1810, commonly called the Battle of Lake Erie.

GEORGE T. DOWNING was born in New York City on December 30, 1819, and established a summer business in Newport in 1846, leasing an estate at the corner of Catherine and Fir Streets. From the outset he was successful. In 1850, he conducted a business in Providence on Mathewson Street near Westminster. In 1854, he erected the Sea Girt Hotel on the site of what is now the Downing Block in Newport. This was destroyed by fire and immediately thereafter he set to work and built the present Downing Block.

Mr. Downing was early active in the abolition movement and was a conductor on the Underground Railroad. He also fought for a good many years against the separate school systems in Rhode Island, and when that victory had been achieved, he threw himself into the fight to remove the law from the statute books preventing intermarriage between the races. He died July 21, 1903.

MRS. JOSEPHINE SILONE YATES was born in Mattituck, Long Island, November 17, 1859. She was taken to Newport in her early youth, attended the public schools there, and was graduated at the head of her class in 1877 from Rogers High School, being the first of her race to do so. She received a medal for scholarship and was graduated two years later from the State Normal School in Providence. While successful as a teacher, her chief contribution to her race was her outstanding work as an organizer and club woman. She died September 3, 1912.

EDWARD MITCHELL BANNISTER, a gifted artist, was born in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, in November, 1828, and died in Providence, January 9, 1901. In Providence he maintained a studio, and became one of the founders of the Providence Art Club. He painted more than 100 pictures. His picture, "Under the Oaks," a scene on the William Goddard Farm, took first prize in Philadelphia at the Centennial Exposition in 1876.

MATILDA SISSIERETTA JONES, one of the most famous opera stars of the late 19th Century, was known as Sissieretta Jones, or "Black Patti." She was born Matilda S. Joyner in Portsmouth, Virginia, and came to Providence as a young girl to study at the Academy of Music. In 1892, she sang at a White House reception given by President Harrison. She was called "The Black Patti" after the famous Italian soprano Adelina Patti. She left the concert stage to star in an all-black group called "The Black Patti's Troubadours," which performed for 19 years in many southern and western cities.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS "FRITZ" POLLARD, a 160-pound halfback elusive as quicksilver, was the star of the Brown University football teams of 1915 and 1916. The 1915 team was invited to play in the first Rose Bowl game and Pollard won election as the first Negro to be named to Walter Camp's All-American team.

Although Brown was beaten 14-0 by Washington State in the Rose Bowl's mud and rain, the team had an 8-1 record the following season and on successive Saturdays defeated Yale and Harvard by identical scores of 21-0, with Pollard scoring five of the six touchdowns.

Fritz Pollard played professional football for a couple of years and then went into the newspaper business. He is now, at the age of 75, a semi-retired public relations man and entertainment booking agent in his native Chicago. In 1967 he came to Providence to be inducted into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame. Earlier he had been voted into Football's Hall of Fame at Rutgers.

REV. M. A. VAN HORNE arrived in Newport October 1, 1868 and was shortly thereafter elected pastor of the Union Congregational Church, a position he held until 1897. He was a delegate to the National Council of Congregational Churches held in Massachusetts. He was elected a member of the Newport School Committee from 1873 to 1892. He was elected member of the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1885 and served for three successive terms. In 1897, he was appointed by President McKinley as U.S. Consul to the Danish West Indies. He died April 24, 1910. □



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